

## The Greatness of God

### Isaiah 40 (read Is 40:1-11)

#### Introduction

- A. The shift from Isaiah 39 to Isaiah 40 is dramatic and it feels abrupt. Chapters 1-39 have a significant degree of commonality. Suddenly things change. Why? What happens?
  - 1. The shift here is so large in the eyes of some scholars they conclude there are in fact 2 or 3 'Isaiahs' writing the book. We think not.
    - Jesus, the apostles, and the Dead Sea scrolls all reveal a unified Isaiah.
  - 2. What happens is that Isaiah moves prophetically from the present situation in Israel and Judah to the future. This is not too difficult for God because He knows the future.
  - 3. The future has two significant events. One is the captivity in Babylon (approximately 586 B.C.) And the second is the coming of the Messiah (salvation).
- B. Though God is punishing His people for their sin He continues to care for them. The content of Isaiah 40 is mainly God and what He will do for His people (sinners in need of grace).
  - 1. My title is **The Greatness of God** (commentary almost seems unnecessary). I hope to show you God's care (1-11), God's greatness (12-26), and God's promise (27-31).
    - God is not "the great meeter of my needs." God is "the great giver of strength."

#### I. God's care is seen in Isaiah 40 in that God desires to see His people receive comfort.

- A. What does God mean by "comfort, comfort my people?" When I think of comfort:
  - 1. To comfort is to console someone in a difficult moment (empathy or sympathy).
  - 2. When I hear comfort I think of being comfortable (like a recliner).
  - 3. When I think comfortable I think about a comforter (like a quilt).

Comfort (def) The act of consoling, giving relief in affliction; a feeling of freedom from worry or disappointment; a state of being relaxed and feeling no pain. *HyperDictionary*

- B. Those are common thoughts re: comfort but God is not primarily interested in consolation. The question is not will my punishment hurt you?
  - 1. When God says comfort He means to impart strength (power and might).

The word 'comfort' derives from the Latin words *con* and *fortis* meaning 'with strength' or 'to make strong.' Too often the sovereignty of God has been seen as a cold and harsh doctrine; yet that is not how God's reign is portrayed in Scripture. The Bible depicts God's sovereignty in a manner designed to strengthen our spirits and to reassure us in this evil and broken world: in a word, to 'comfort.' Frederick Leahy in *The Hand of God*, p 197  
 Isaiah 40:28-31 (ESV) Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. 30 Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; 31 but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

- 2. God's will is power, strength, and renewed strength (not fainting, exhausted or weary) in the midst of difficult times.

- C. To that end, in Isaiah 40:3-11, three voices are heard. We need to hear truth out loud. The NT writers understand these verses of Scripture to refer to Jesus Christ.
1. In Isaiah 40:3-5 the glory of the Lord will be revealed (John the Baptist then Christ).
    - a voice cries “prepare the way of the Lord ... the glory of the Lord shall be revealed ... and all flesh shall see it together.”
  2. In Isaiah 40:6-8 the word of the Lord will stand forever.
    - When Peter quotes this in 1 Pet 1:24-25 he says the word is the good news that was preached to you, namely, Jesus Christ and His gospel.
  3. In Isaiah 40:9-11 behold your God! who comes in might. He will tend His flock like a shepherd. He will gather His lambs in His arms (John 10 tells us Jesus Christ is the shepherd).
- D. In summary, God is on the move. God will save His people from the wrath to come that their sins (our sins) richly deserve. His people receive comfort through these truths:
1. His glory will be revealed.
  2. His Word will stand forever.
  3. He will care for His people.

## II. But. But, is God able to do that? Is He faithful and true? Is God strong enough?

- A. Folks had to be wondering. Assyria is gone and Babylon will take everything? Comfort?
1. What good is God anyway? Well, God goes on to explain His might and power. In a shortened version of Job 38-41 God explains who He is. Ponder the greatness of God.
- B. God is infinitely greater than creation and the entire universe.
1. He holds the waters of the sea in the hollow of His hand (God is Spirit and does not have literal hands but these terms are used to communicate what God is like).
    - Water covers about 70% of the earth ( because a gallon is a small unit the total number of gallons is beyond our comprehension).
  2. God measures off the heavens with a span.
    - A span is about 8" long. The nearest star (after our sun) is 4.5 light years away, or 26 trillion miles. Light takes 4.4 years (186,000 miles/sec). to get here.
  3. Mountains are massively huge (they cause one to feel small).
    - God simply weighs them on His scales.
- C. God is infinitely greater than man (individually or collectively).
1. Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord? Or what man gives God counsel? Who gave God understanding? No one at Living Hope.
  2. Therefore, the nations are like a drop in a bucket. Dust on the scales. And in case you're not yet buying Isaiah says they are nothing, they are less than nothing.
- D. To whom then will you liken this God?

1. Anything that competes for supremacy with God is an idol (false God).
2. God sits above the circle of the earth and its people are like grasshoppers. He brings rulers and princes to nothing in His time. He blows on them, they wither.
3. To whom then will you compare God? Oh, one more thing, the stars.
  - Who made them? Atheists, demonstrating a faith that is far larger than ours, say no one did it. It just happened. They suppress obvious truth.

Romans 1:18-21 (ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

- There are 100 billion galaxies and they each contain an estimated 100 billion stars. God calls each one by name. That's infinitely large.

Ex: SSA website lists the top 1000 names for each decade back to the 1880s. Total all the names you won't even have 10,000 names (Let's add languages).

4. If you don't believe God created the world and the universe in which we live you will be without comfort and you will be without hope.

In Hebrews 11:3 we read, 'By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God.' This we *understand*. This is not the product of speculation or guess-work or credulity. It is by faith - a faith enlightened by the Word of God, which in itself is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). We either exercise this light-induced faith in God and His Word or a blind faith in a man-made theory. In the latter case there is no certainty, no comfort, and no hope. Frederick Leahy in *The Hand of God*, p 19

### III. The conclusion of Isaiah 40 (verses 27-31) shows us God's promise.

- A. First, God asks a few questions. Why do say my way and my right (cause) is hidden from God? Don't you know, haven't you heard? God is God.
  1. He is the everlasting One (He has always existed) and He is the Creator. He doesn't faint or grow weary (sleep). His understanding is unsearchable.
    - That should bring us up short (God is always doing more than we see).
  2. In view of His power and activity you are not disregarded.
- B. In fact, those who wait on God shall renew their strength. They shall soar as eagles, they shall run, they shall walk and not faint.
  1. To be faint, and weary, and exhausted is to be overcome by circumstances. There are circumstances that are exceedingly great (not only hard but evil). Where is God?

When the Christian speaks of the sovereignty of God, the atheist shakes his head and smiles "Do you live in the real world?" he asks. "Do you ever read a newspaper or watch the news?" "Either this God of yours is a cruel, heartless tyrant, or so feeble he is not able to govern." The atheist's words reveal a profound ignorance of the facts: the fact that the earth is under a curse because of man's sin (Gen 3:17); the fact that Satan, the enemy of God and man, who is likened to 'a roaring lion' (1 Pet 5:8), the fact of man's sinful behavior to his fellow-man, the

fact that by the cross of Christ Satan's time is limited and that in due course (God's time, not ours) evil will be banished from the universe. The atheist denies these facts, although most of them are staring him in the face, and so he walks in the darkness of his unbelief... Much of the evil in this world is Satanic in origin, and for the present, God in his longsuffering patience permits such a world to exist. What God allows, He wills. Frederick Leahy in *The Hand of God*, p 20-22

2. I cannot answer questions about why God does what He does because His ways and His thoughts are much higher than mine (or yours). But I know:
  - The greatest injustice ever took place at Calvary (Jesus dies on a cross).
  - God's promises are true, therefore, we can trust Him.

Isaiah 26:3-4 (ESV) You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. 4 Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.

Confidence in the sovereignty of God in *all* that effects us is crucial to our trusting Him. *If there is a single event in all of the universe that can occur outside of God's sovereign control then we cannot trust Him.* His love may be infinite, but if His power is limited and His purpose can be thwarted, we cannot trust Him. Jerry Bridges in *Trusting God*, p 37

- C. How do we wait on God? Waiting is not passive, waiting is active, and time is involved. To wait on God means at least three things:

1. One, we live with confident expectation of God's ultimate action on our behalf (in the NT the term is hope and ultimately refers to His second coming).
  - God is not "the great meeter of my needs." God is "the great giver of strength."
  - Ex: How could saints past be a martyr for Christ and call it gain?

1 Peter 1:13 (ESV) Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:11-14 (ESV) For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

- To put it another way we live with eternity in view. If we build a facility it must matter in eternity.
2. Two, we seek God because we desire Him. We desire Him because He loves us and He saved us by sending His only Son to die for our sin.

Lamentations 3:25 (ESV) The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.

3. Three, as we wait we desire to know God's will for our life. Our concern is to obey God promptly when we become aware of any action He desires.

If, as Isaiah 40 tells us, no one can counsel the Lord, then I ought not relate to God by trying to correct Him or straighten Him out. Rather, I seek to know what His will is and do it. Bruce Ware in *God's Greater Glory*, p 29

## Close

- A. God does not need to change our circumstances to give us strength and power. He may do that because He is God but loves to show Himself strong when we are feeling weak.

1. That was Paul's experience.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (ESV) So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2. I hope you are familiar with God's grace and His comfort. If you wait on Him He will show Himself strong on your behalf. Trust Him.

### **Discussion Questions**

Do you believe God cares for you? Explain why.

Recount situations where you received comfort from God.

How does God's power and greatness effect your life?

How do you go about waiting on God?

Are there any areas of your life where you believe God has not been faithful? If so, where do you go for hope?